The Cask of Amontillado

FORTUNATO HAD HURT ME A thousand times and I had suffered quietly. But then I learned that he had laughed at my proud name, Montresor, the name of an old and honored family. I promised myself that I would make him pay for this — that I would have **revenge**. You must not suppose, however, that I spoke of this to anyone. I would make him pay, yes; but I would act only with the greatest care. I must not suffer as a result of taking my revenge. A **wrong** is not made right in that manner. And also the wrong would not be made right unless Fortunato knew that he was paying and knew who was forcing him to pay.

I gave Fortunato no cause to doubt me. I continued to smile in his face, and he did not understand that I was now smiling at the thought of what I planned for him, at the thought of my revenge.

Fortunato was a strong man, a man to be feared. But he had one great weakness: he liked to drink good wine, and indeed he drank much of it. So he knew a lot about fine wines, and **proudly** believed that he was a trained judge of them. I, too, knew old wines well, and

I bought the best I could find. And wine, I thought, wine would give me my revenge!

It was almost dark, one evening in the spring, when I met Fortunato in the street, alone. He spoke to me more **warmly** than was usual, for already he had drunk more wine than was good for him. I acted pleased to see him, and I shook his hand, as if he had been my closest friend.

"Fortunato! How are you?"

"Montresor! Good evening, my friend."

"My dear Fortunato! I am indeed glad that I have met you. I was just thinking of you. For I have been tasting my new wine. I have bought a full **cask** of a fine wine which they tell me is Amontillado. But…."

"Amontillado! Quite impossible."

"I know. It does not seem possible. As I could not find you I was just going to talk to Luchresi. If anyone understands wines it is Luchresi. He will tell me…."

"Luchresi? He does not know one wine from another!"

"But they say he knows as much about wines as you know."

"Ho! — Come. Let us go."

"Go where?"

"To your **vaults**. To taste the wine."

"No, my friend, no. I can see that you are not well. And the vaults are cold and wet."

"I do not care. Let us go. I'm well enough. The cold is nothing. Amontillado! Someone is playing games with you. And Luchresi! Ha! Luchresi knows nothing about wines, nothing at all."

As he spoke, Fortunato took my arm, and I allowed him to **hurry** me to my great stone **palace**, where my family, the Montresors, had lived for centuries. There was no one at home. I had told the **servants** that they must not leave the palace, as I would not return until the following morning and they must care for the place. This, I knew, was enough to make it certain that they would all leave as soon as my back was turned.

I took down from their places on the wall two **brightly** burning lights. I gave one of these to Fortunato and led him to a wide doorway. There we could see the stone steps going down into the darkness.

Asking him to be careful as he followed, I went down before him, down under the ground, deep under the old walls of my palace. We came finally to the bottom of the steps and stood there a moment together. The earth which formed the floor was cold and hard. We were entering the last resting place of the dead of the Montresor family. Here too we kept our finest wines, here in the cool, dark, still air under the ground.

Fortunato's step was not sure, because of the wine he had been drinking. He looked **uncertainly** around him, trying to see through the thick darkness which pushed in around us. Here our brightly burning lights seemed weak indeed. But our eyes soon became used to the darkness. We could see the bones of the dead lying in large piles along the walls. The stones of the walls were wet and cold.

From the long rows of bottles which were lying on the floor, among the bones, I chose one which contained a very good wine. Since I did not have anything to open the bottle with, I struck the stone wall with it and broke off the small end. I offered the bottle to Fortunato.

"Here, Fortunato. Drink some of this fine Medoc. It will help to keep us warm. Drink!"

"Thank you, my friend. I drink to the dead who lie sleeping around us."

"And I, Fortunato — I drink to your long life."

"Ahh! A very fine wine, indeed! But the Amontillado?"

"It is farther on. Come."

We walked on for some time. We were now under the river's bed, and water fell in drops upon us from above. Deeper into the ground we went, past still more bones.

"Your vaults are many, and large. There seems to be no end to them."

"We are a great family, and an old one. It is not far now. But I can see you are **trembling** with the cold. Come! Let us go back before it is too late."

"It is nothing. Let us go on. But first, another drink of your Medoc!"

I took up from among the bones another bottle. It was another wine of a fine quality, a De Grâve. Again I broke off the neck of the

bottle. Fortunato took it and drank it all without stopping for a breath. He laughed, and threw the empty bottle over his shoulder.

We went on, deeper and deeper into the earth. Finally we arrived at a vault in which the air was so old and heavy that our lights almost died. Against three of the walls there were piles of bones higher than our heads. From the fourth wall someone had pulled down all the bones, and they were spread all around us on the ground. In the middle of the wall was an opening into another vault, if I can call it that — a little room about three feet wide, six or seven feet high, and perhaps four feet deep. It was hardly more than a hole in the wall.

"Go on," I said. "Go in; the Amontillado is in there."

Fortunato continued to go forward, uncertainly. I followed him immediately. Soon, of course, he reached the back wall. He stood there a moment, facing the wall, surprised and wondering. In that wall were two heavy iron rings. A short chain was hanging from one of these and a lock from the other. Before Fortunato could guess what was happening, I closed the lock and chained him **tightly** to the wall. I stepped back.

"Fortunato," I said. "Put your hand against the wall. You must feel how the water runs over it. Once more I ask you, please, will you not go back? No? If not, then I must leave you. But first I must do everything I can for you."

"But…But the Amontillado?"

"Ah, yes, yes indeed; the Amontillado."

As I spoke these words I began to search among the bones. Throwing them to one side I found the stones which earlier I had taken down from the wall. Quickly I began to build the wall again, covering the hole where Fortunato stood trembling.

"Montresor! What are you doing!?"

I continued working. I could hear him pulling at the chain, shaking it **wildly**. Only a few stones remained to put in their place.

"Montresor! Ha-ha. This is a very good joke, indeed. Many times will we laugh about it — ha-ha — as we drink our wine together — ha-ha."

"Of course. As we drink the Amontillado."

"But is it not late? Should we not be going back? They will be expecting us. Let us go."

"Yes. Let us go."

As I said this I lifted the last stone from the ground.

"Montresor! For the love of God!!"

"Yes. For the love of God!"

I heard no answer. "Fortunato!" I cried. "Fortunato." I heard only a soft, low sound, a half-cry of fear. My heart grew sick; it must have been the cold. I hurried to force the last stone into its position. And I put the old bones again in a pile against the wall. For half a century now no human hand has touched them. May he rest in peace!